

School Health Index (SHI)

Frequently Asked Questions

CDC – School Health Index

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI/training/index.htm>

What is the School Health Index?

The School Health Index (SHI) is a self-assessment and planning guide developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that enables schools to

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of their school health promotion policies and programs.
- Develop an action plan for improving student health.
- Involve teachers, parents, students, and the community in improving school policies, programs, and services.

The policies and practices recommended in the School Health Index are derived from CDC's research-based guidelines for school health programs, which identify the policies and practices most likely to be effective in improving youth health risk behaviors.

The SHI currently addresses five health topic areas, including:

- Physical activity
- Healthy eating
- Tobacco-use prevention
- Unintentional injury and violence prevention (safety)
- Asthma

It also includes cross-cutting questions, which address policies and practices that apply to all five health topic areas.

How much does it cost to get copies of the SHI?

Copies of the SHI are available free of charge! You can interactively complete, download, print, or order copies on the CDC Web Site at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI> or request a copy by email at cdc-info@cdc.gov or by phone at 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Is it going to cost my school money to implement the SHI?

The main cost associated with implementation of the SHI is time. Many schools have done it with no funding at all—merely getting some dedicated time (perhaps part of a

staff development day or teacher workday) for the school health team to come together to complete the self-assessment modules and create an action plan. Some schools have received a small amount (\$500-\$1,000) of seed money to pay for substitute teachers, refreshments, and materials for their SHI team meetings.

Once schools have developed their action plans, many have been able to implement some of the actions with no funding at all. For activities that might require some funding, many schools have used their SHI results to help obtain money or donated resources/time from community organizations, local businesses, state/local agencies, etc.

How long is it going to take to complete the SHI?

Field testing of the SHI has shown that it can be completed in as little as 6 hours, though this will vary depending on the amount of time needed to collect information or for discussion.

Can one person complete the SHI for my school?

No, the SHI is meant to be completed by school health teams. This gives teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members a means of contributing to school health promotion by providing specific opportunities to involve them in the assessment process and inviting them to help shape plans to improve school programs.

Do I have to report my results from the SHI to the CDC?

No. The CDC does not ask that schools report their scores. The SHI is a self-assessment process, and the data are not meant to be reported to outside agencies for the purposes of comparison. However, the CDC would like to hear about your success stories from using the SHI. See [Share Your Stories and Comments!](#)

Your stories might even be highlighted on the CDC Web site or in other promotional materials!

Is my school going to be punished if we score poorly on the SHI?

Absolutely not. The SHI will help the school determine its own strengths and weaknesses solely for the purposes of self-improvement.

Should I use the online version or the paper format of the SHI?

The SHI can be completed online or on hard copy. Both methods are equally as effective. Many schools have found that the online version saves time, because it allows you to

- customize your SHI based on the health topics (i.e., physical activity, nutrition, tobacco-use prevention, safety, asthma) you would like to address

- save your responses in the system
- leave and re-enter the system as often as you would like
- have your module scores be automatically calculated
- archive previous versions of the SHI, which may assist in record-keeping for schools who plan to complete the SHI annually
- print and share Scorecards and School Health Improvement Plans with team members, administrators, and others

If I'm using the online version of the SHI, will my scores be automatically submitted to my school district or state?

Your online SHI scores will not be automatically sent to anyone. The only way your school's information can be viewed is using your team name and password.

Do I need permission to use the SHI?

No. The SHI was developed with federal funds by a federal agency, so you do not need any permission to use it.

Has the SHI been tested for validity and reliability?

The School Health Index was field tested for readability and user-friendliness. We have no validity and reliability data for the simple reason that the SHI is not a research tool; it is a community organizing and educational tool.

Has the SHI been evaluated?

Several articles have been published in scientific journals that have evaluated the SHI implementation process and described the results of the process. Other studies have used the items from the SHI as indicators of best practices:

Austin SB, Fung T, Cohen-Bearak A, Wardle K, Cheung LWY. Facilitating change in school health: a qualitative study of schools' experiences using the School Health Index. *Preventing Chronic Disease* [serial online] 2006 Apr.

Brener ND, Pejavara A, Barrios LC, Crossett L, Lee SM, McKenna M, Michael S, Wechsler H. Applying the School Health Index to a Nationally Representative Sample of Schools. *Journal of School Health* 2006;76(2):57-66.

Pearlman DN, Dowling E, Bayuk C, Cullinen K, Thacher AK. From concept to practice: using the School Health Index to create healthy school environments in Rhode Island elementary schools. *Preventing Chronic Disease* [serial online] 2005 Nov.

Staten LK, Teufel-Shone NI, Steinfelt VE, Ortega N, Halverson K, Flores C, et al. The School Health Index as an impetus for change. *Preventing Chronic Disease* [serial online] 2005 Jan.

What are the differences between the elementary school SHI and the middle/high school SHI?

The majority of the items in the two versions are identical. However, there are a few questions that are targeted toward school level. For example, the elementary school SHI includes questions about recess and hand washing which are not included in the middle/high school SHI. The middle/high SHI asks about tobacco cessation services.

Also, there are certain questions that are included in both versions but reflect different requirements for the school levels. For instance, the elementary school SHI suggests a total of 150 minutes of physical education per week, whereas the middle/high school SHI suggests a total of 225 minutes per week.